

8 What will be done to help the first candidates for GCSE?

As now, they will have a two-year course to prepare for the examinations. Their teachers will receive special training. In addition, many candidates will take mock GCSE examinations before the GCSE examinations proper.

9 How many subjects will a pupil be able to take?

Pupils will be able, with the guidance of their teachers, to choose how many and which subjects to take at GCSE.

10 Will it be possible to take GCSE in more than one sitting?

Yes.

11 Will it be possible to resit GCSE examinations?

Yes.

12 What about Distinction and Merit Certificates?

The Government has proposed that Distinction and Merit Certificates should be awarded to candidates who gain good grades in a defined range of subjects. The aim is to encourage the ablest pupils, in particular, to pursue broad and balanced courses. Decisions will be announced later.

13 What will happen to O-level and CSE certificates?

O-level and CSE certificates will continue to be awarded until replaced by GCSE certificates in the summer of 1988. Employers, colleges and others who use examination results will know that only O-level and CSE certificates will be available until GCSE is introduced in 1988.

14 Are GCE A-levels or the proposed AS levels affected by these plans?

No.

15 How can I find out more about GCSE?

Schools and colleges will be able to give further information as the plans for GCSE are developed. For those professionally concerned with examinations, the Government will be publishing the 'national criteria' and a general introduction to GCSE early in 1985.

*GCSE
The new exam
system at
16-plus*

The General Certificate of Secondary Education

1 What is GCSE?

GCSE is the new examination which is to replace GCE O-level, CSE and Joint 16-plus examinations. The standards expected will be at least as high as in these existing examinations.

2 When will GCSE come in?

The first GCSE courses will begin in September 1986.

The first GCSE examinations will be taken in summer 1988.

From summer 1988 onwards, O-level and CSE examinations will no longer be available.

Most pupils who have entered secondary school since September 1983 are likely to take GCSE.

3 What's new about GCSE?

It will be a single system of examinations, with a single scale of grades. Candidates will no longer have to choose between O-levels, CSE and Joint 16-plus examinations.

The examinations will test not only memory and orderly presentation of facts but also understanding, practical and other skills, and the ability to apply knowledge.

All GCSE courses and examinations will follow nationally agreed guidelines, known as the 'national criteria'. These will cover course objectives, content and assessment methods. The aim will be to help pupils to benefit as much as possible from their studies.

The performance of candidates will be measured against defined yardsticks. The 'national criteria' will be extended as soon as practicable to include 'grade criteria'. These will spell out what pupils will need to know, understand and be able to do in order to achieve a particular grade in a subject.

This means:

- 1 pupils and teachers will have clearer goals to aim at;
- 2 employers and colleges will have a much better idea than at present of what candidates have achieved.

Five groups of examining boards will set the examinations and award grades, instead of the 20 examining boards which now do so separately.

4 How will GCSE be fair to candidates of differing abilities?

The new examinations will be designed to demand more of able candidates than of less able candidates and to award grades accordingly. Within each subject there will be a choice of papers or questions, which will give candidates of all abilities the opportunity to show what they understand, know and can do. Teachers will be able to guide pupils on which papers and questions to attempt.

5 How will GCSE grades compare with existing grades?

Successful candidates will be awarded grades on a single scale from A to G. Grades A to C will have standards at least as high as O-level grades A to C and CSE grade 1. Grades D to G will have standards at least as high as CSE grades 2 to 5. The basis for awarding grades will change after the introduction of 'grade criteria'. But the grade titles, A to G, will remain the same, and the broadly equivalent grades will continue to be:

O-level	GCSE	CSE
A	A	1
B	B	
C	C	
D	D	2
E	E	3
F	F	4
G	G	5

Unsuccessful candidates will, as now, be ungraded and will not receive GCSE certificates.

6 Will employers and others know about GCSE certificates?

Yes. Between now and 1988 the Government, employers' organisations and the education service will take special steps to inform employers and other users about the new examinations.

7 Who will be able to take GCSE?

Anyone, of any age, whether studying in a maintained school, an independent school, a further education college or privately.